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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 DJIBOUTI 001042

STATE FOR AF/E, PRM/AFR, S/CRS AND USAID  
ADDIS ABABA FOR REFCOORD  
NAIROBI FOR RDRAPCHO AND REFCOORD  
GENEVA FOR KPERKINS  
CJTF-HOA FOR POLAD

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREF SMIG EAID SO FT DJ XA  
SUBJECT: UNHCR DJIBOUTI RECIEVES OFFICIAL VISIT FROM GENEVA  
HEADQUARTERS

REF: DJIBOUTI 632 (AND PREVIOUS)

¶1. SUMMARY: Mr. Mengesha Kebede, UNHCR's Deputy Director of the Bureau for Africa in Geneva visited Djibouti. He emphasized the need for closer coordination among UN agencies, donors, host governments, and regional actors to prepare for possible large scale migrations resulting from conflict and food insecurity. UNHCR has contingency plans for up to 50,000 refugees in Djibouti. UNHCR has completed evaluation of 73 Eritrean defectors' cases, and is looking for a country where they can be resettled as a group. END SUMMARY.

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PARTNERSHIP AND COORDINATION  
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¶2. On December 7, Mr. Mengesha Kebede, UNHCR's Deputy Director of the Bureau for Africa in Geneva, along with Ann Encontre, UNHCR Representative in Djibouti, met with the Ambassador and post's Consular Officer. During the meeting, Mr. Kebede provided a brief overview of his meetings with the UN country team in Djibouti, where he expressed the need for all UN agencies to work in partnership and coordination with the GoDJ, donors, and implementing partners for future planning in Djibouti. He expressed concern over possible additional flows of Somali refugees into Djibouti due to continued insecurity in Somalia, but said he expected most to head for Kenya. Asked about contingency planning in Djibouti; Kebede said UNHCR has adequate plans in place for up to 50,000 refugees. The response would involve rapid mobilization of UNHCR supplies already pre-positioned in Denmark and Dubai and reopening former refugee camps in Djibouti.

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COMPLEX MIGRATION CALLS FOR IOM  
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¶3. Mr. Kebede informed post of the presence of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) who are setting up office in Djibouti. He referred to elements such as the current bad economic climate, ongoing conflicts, drought that is straddling borders - all leading to complex mixed migration movements in the region. There are more reports of trafficking and smuggling of persons, migration movements from the Dankali region, also known as the Afar region, as well as Somalis from the Ogaden region to Djibouti. Mr. Kebede believes that IOM can play a helpful role here because these migrations are more complex than traditional refugee movements.

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DEPUTY DIRECTOR CALLS FOR IMPROVEMENT  
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¶4. The Deputy Director's visit included a tour of the refugee camp in Ali Addeh, which hosts approximately 9000 refugees, mostly Somalis. Upon arrival at the refugee camp, Mr. Kebede and the UNHCR country Representative found that medical care had not been available to refugees for three weeks because the Association of

Medical Doctors of Asia, and non-governmental organization who supply the refugee camp with medical services, had suspended medical services, after refugees, angry with the doctor because of the death of a baby at child birth, had attacked the doctor - blaming him for the death.

¶15. The Ethiopian refugees reported to Mr. Kebede that the security situation at the camp had worsened since the arrival of thousands of south Somalis who blame the Ethiopian troops in their country (and by extension, the Ethiopian refugees) for making war in their country, forcing them to leave their homes. The refugees also reported that, for over two years, the UNHCR Senior Protection Officer has failed to hold meetings with them. Last but not least, Mr. Kebede witnessed the dilapidated food distribution center.

¶16. After the camp visit, Mr. Kebede met with Mr. Hassan Omar, also attended by post Consular Officer, to de-brief on three major issues he found lacking at the camp: health, security, and food distribution. He highlighted the aforementioned concerns to Mr. Hassan and made some suggestions for improvement. In addition he strongly suggested that a Transit / Reception center be built to accommodate the refugees for a few days when they newly arrive at the camp.

¶17. Kebede confirmed that UNHCR is also receiving reports of an undetermined number of unregistered refugees who have recently arrived in Djibouti city from Ethiopia. For now, they are staying with local families and seeking no assistance. But, this group is likely to become a burden in the food insecure environment if their presences persist.

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ERITREAN DEFECTORS

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¶18. Meanwhile, UNHCR completed the evaluation of the Eritrean deserters' cases, and found all 73 individuals qualified for resettlement.

¶19. COMMENTS: Post agrees with Mr. Kebede's statement of the necessity to coordinate between working entities in Djibouti, in an effort to design and implement successful projects. Such coordination should send a positive and strong message to the GODJ and possibly avert negative Government action on implementing partners. Even though significant progress has been achieved at the refugee camp, considerable work remains to bring the camp up to international standards. Hopefully, Mr. Kebede's visit will trigger the necessary actions toward improvement. Post will continue to follow and report on the Eritrean defectors resettlement process. Post looks forward to the January visit of PRM Program officer and the Regional Refugee Coordinator to discuss these concerns in further detail. END COMMENT.